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AUTHOR Giele, Janet Zollinger
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ABSTRACT

The problem of discrimination against families within the context of changing sex roles and the growing diversity of family structure is discussed in this paper. It begins with an analysis of underlying social trends, then focuses on sex discrimination and discrimination against different family types and concludes with an interpretation of emerging family values. In Section One: Trends in Sex Roles and Family Life, discussion centers upon women's rising labor force participation, changes in household form, and measures of discrimination. Section Two: Sex Role Discrimination and Family Life focuses on the issues of economic support functions, child care and nurturing, and the impact of sex discrimination on both husband-wife and female-headed families. In Section Three: Discrimination by Household Type and Family Form, issues for single-parent families, living arrangements of unrelated individuals, as well as extended families, family size, and family composition are discussed. In conclusion, Section Four: Possible Future Developments briefly explores the topics of greater sex role flexibility, broader definitions of family values, diversity in life patterns, and policies to promote equity among and choice of alternate family forms. (Author/RH)

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DISCRIMINATION, SEX ROLES, AND CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURES

Janet Zollinger Giele

Heller School, Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts 02254

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Discrimination against families is a more difficult concept to define than it at first appears. The idea implies that different types of families should enjoy equal rights; yet it is precisely this assumption that is at issue in the current national debate on the American family. Conservatives feel that certain types of family should be discouraged such as the single-parent family, the two-career family, the childless couple, or households of individuals not related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Liberals, on the other hand, document growing diversity in family structure and imply that there should be equitable treatment of individuals regardless of the family context in which they live.

My paper responds to both levels of this debate: first, by showing that changing social trends have transformed the shape of the American family, but with no one clear pattern in the ascendency; and second, by recognizing the alternative value positions from which one can view the change that has occurred. It appears that current family changes indicate American pluralism rather than family breakdown. Accordingly, family values are under pressure to embrace a wider variety of both traditional and contemporary family forms. Policies and programs are under scrutiny for their capacity to enhance the long-term quality of intimate caring relationships whether they be found in the family as traditionally defined or in other types of living arrangements that foster familial behavior. In this climate of change it is appropriate to ask whether there are supports and protections for the working wife, but also whether there are supports and protections for the homemaker wife. It is right to express concern for the family with children, but also for the family

who do not have children. By the same reasoning, large and traditional extended families should not face undue hardship; but neither should unrelated persons (e.g. older single or widowed persons) who share congregate living arrangements that promote familial behavior and caring relationships.

Discrimination by this standard thus refers to major inequities in well-being or quality of life that are experienced by different family and household types. Some discrimination, such as that expressed in zoning or housing regulations, is deliberate or intended. Other discrimination is de facto and can only be inferred from indirect measures like health status or proportion living in poverty. The remainder of this paper examines the evidence on discrimination against families that is related to changing sex roles and growing diversity of family structure. It begins with an analysis of underlying social trends, then focuses on sex discrimination and discrimination against different family types, and concludes with an interpretation of emerging family values.

I. Trends in Sex Roles and Family Life

Two major levers have created pressures for change in family life. One is the striking change in adult women's life cycle that in the past century has doubled the time left between the point when a woman's last child leaves home and the end of her life from roughly 15 to 30 years. The other major change is the inexorable march of industrialization that has moved people off the farms and out of the small towns into a vast urban economy where the work-place is typically separate from family life. These demographic and economic forces have brought enormous change not only to women's roles but to prevailing family structure.

Women's rising labor force participation.

Changes in women's life cycle have brought longer life and a shortened childbearing period. The net effect has been to shift much of women's activity away from its traditional focus in the home.

> By 1975 the fertility rate of women 15 to 44 years old was only half of what it had been twenty years earlier.
>
> This decline, in turn, coincided with a trend toward later marriages. By 1971 more than half of all women twenty years of age were single in contrast to only one-third in 1960, and the number of unmarried women in the 20-to-24 age bracket had climbed from 28 per cent in 1960 to 37 per cent a decade later.
>
> Simultaneously, the greatest increase in the female labor force occurred among younger women of childbearing age. The proportion of women working in the 20-to-24-year-old age group increased from 50 per cent in 1964 to 61 per cent in 1973. Among college women in that age group the employment rate was 86 per cent. But the fastest rise of all took place among women with young children. From 1959 through 1974 the employment rate of mothers with children under three more than doubled, from 15 to 31 per cent, and that for mothers of children three to five years old increased from 25 to 39 per cent (Chafe 1977:145-146).

Many of these trends will likely continue in the future. It is now predicted that by 1990 the labor force participation rate of women ages 35 to 54 will be near 60 percent, a gain of more than ten percentage points over the rate in 1970 for women of comparable age (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1977: 329). By 1990 it is also predicted that half of all mothers with children under 6 will be in the labor force, that two-thirds of all women under 55 will be working, and that the pattern of a wife staying at home to look after children will fit only one-fourth of the 44 million women who are expected to be married and living with their husbands (Smith 1979).

Yet along with their employment, women will continue to marry and have children. In fact it is expected that a slightly higher proportion will be

married and be the mothers of school age children in 1990 than in 1978 (see Table 1). Yet because of women's lower birth expectations, average family size will continue to decline from roughly 3.6 in 1970 to 3.0 in 1990 (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1977: 62).

Changes in household form

As a result of these two major forces, women's greater participation in work away from the home, and their continuing willingness to marry and have children, the modal family structure has shifted to a more symmetrical form. Rather than a breadwinner-husband and homemaker-wife that characterized the American family in the agricultural and early industrial eras, many families now contain a wife as well as a husband who earns income. In 1950 only about one-third (36 percent) of all families had two earners or more. By 1975 the proportion had grown to nearly a half. In 1976 Hayghe estimated that families with both a husband and wife in the labor force made up 41 percent of all U.S. husband-wife families, a larger single block than any other form; families with husbands only in the labor force accounted for 34 percent and families with wives only in the labor force accounted for three percent.

Although the early industrial (husband-breadwinner, wife-homemaker) type of family is in the process of being edged out of first place by the dual-worker form, it still constitutes a major alternative in America today. This is shown by recent figures on the proportions of husband-wife families with and without children who have a wife in the labor force or in the home. (See Table 2.) Husband-wife families constitute roughly two-thirds of all households. Of this number the proportions with wife-earners (15 percent and 13 percent among those with and without children present) and of wife-homemakers (19 percent and 17 percent among those with and without children present) are just about equal. This finding suggests to me that we now have available a repertoire of

Table 1

PROJECTIONS OF THE FEMALE LABOR FORCE IN 1990

	Population				Labor Force Participation Rate	
	Actual 1978 (March)		Projected 1990		Actual 1978 (March)	Projected 1990
	(thousands)	(percent)	(thousands)	(percent)		(percent)
Total, ages 16 and over	83,374		94,690		49.1	54.8
Ages 16-24	18,277		15,535		57.9	67.1
Ages 25-54	41,059		52,023		60.4	68.6
Ages 55 and over	24,038		27,132		23.3	21.2
Total, ages 16-54	59,336		67,558		59.6	68.3
Never-married	15,544	.26	13,757	.20	62.8	68.8
Married, husband present	35,802	.60	44,390	.66	55.4	66.7
No children under age 18	11,439	.19	12,942	.19	66.0	73.9
Children ages 6-17 only	13,231	.22	17,859	.26	57.9	70.1
Children unier age 6	11,132	.19	13,589	.20	41.6	55.3
Other ever-married	7,989	.13	9,410	.14	72.1	75.0
No children under age 18	3,433	.06	3,740	.06	76.9	81.9
Children ages 6-17 only	3,042	.05	3,882	.06	72.8	73.8
Children under age 6	1,515	.03	1,788	.03	60.0	63.4

Source: Smith, The Subtle Revolution, pp. 14-15.

several workable family forms that people may select according to their own personal, economic, or cultural needs. Each broad type is probably associated with a particular rhythm of life and ecological niche.

In addition to husband-wife families it is important to note the presence of other household forms. Fully one-fifth of all households are composed of a single person, a proportion that has doubled since 1955. Another 14 percent are headed by a male or female head without spouse present; this figure also reflects a great increase. The proportion of families headed by women rose from nine percent in 1960 to 13 percent in 1975. (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1977: 62, 69). A tiny but growing proportion of households are composed of two or more unrelated individuals of either the same or the opposite sex. Of nearly twelve million primary individuals (persons who lived alone in a single person household or with nonrelatives only), 8 percent lived in two-person households in 1970. By 1977 the number of primary individuals had grown to 19 million of whom nearly 10 percent lived in two-person households (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1979: 43).

In addition to these major types of household and family structure, there has been considerable interest during the last decade in variant family forms, communal living arrangements, and what sociologist Eugene Litwak (1970) terms the "modified extended family" that may be composed of nonrelatives as well as family members. Such emerging forms represent only a tiny and difficult-to-document proportion of all households. Nevertheless, they are mentioned here because they represent continuity with the nineteenth century pattern of taking in roomers and boarders, they may contribute useful innovative possibilities for the future, and they represent an additional family form that should be remembered in any study of discrimination.

Table 2

Characteristics of Households, 1976*

	Number	Percent of Total
All Households	72,900	100.0
Husband/Wife	47,300	64.9
with children under 18	25,100	34.4
wife in the labor force	11,200	15.4
wife not in the labor force	13,900	19.1
husband only in the labor force	11,400	15.6
no children under 18	22,200	30.6
wife in the labor force	9,700	13.3
wife not in the labor force	12,500	17.1
husband only in the labor force	9,900	13.6
Female-Headed (with others)	8,000	11.0
Male-Headed (with others)	2,500	3.4
Single-Person	15,000	20.6
Female	9,600	13.2
Male	5,400	7.4

* Compiled from statistics of the Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Categories may not add to totals due to rounding.

Source: Nancy Smith Barrett, "Data Needs for Evaluating the Labor Market Status of Woman." Prepared for the Census Bureau Conference on Issues in Federal Statistical Needs Relating to Women, April 27-28, 1978. Bethesda, Maryland.

Measures of Discrimination

Over the past several years as researchers have examined many types of family, they have gradually converged on a list of several basic functions that all families perform, no matter what their particular structure. These functions are nurturant, economic, residential, and cultural (Giele 1979). Performance of these functions varies widely according to the class, region, ethnicity, age, and composition of a family, but the usefulness of the list is that one can ask, is each major family function being adequately fulfilled? Are some types of family better off than others with respect to one or more of these dimensions? Is there evidence either of deliberate or de facto discrimination that systematically lowers the quality of life for one type of family as compared with another?

To answer these questions it is necessary to define some objective indicators that reveal variation in well-being across different groups. In this paper it will only be possible to suggest the major types of evidence that are relevant in each of the four functional domains and to refer to them illustratively when comparing the situation of major family types, such as husband-wife families or single parent households.

Nurturance and socialization refer to such family tasks as provision of food, rest, child care, and other personal care to family members. The nurturant function is focused on sexual gratification, care, feeding, and emotional support of the individual, and the family is the primary unit in society for serving this function not only for children, but for the sick, the aged, and healthy adult men and women. Differences between family types on such indices as amount of work overload or health status of family members would raise a question of whether discrimination by family type accounted for the variation.

The economic function links the family group to the material resources that enable it to survive; it also governs the internal division of labor in

the household and affects outside labor force participation of the members. The family's economic well-being depends on the interaction of a number of factors: family composition, employment of the members, and income from public and private transfers such as Social Security, pensions, medical benefits, etc. One way to measure the impact of outside forces (including discrimination) is to examine their effects on labor force participation of family members and total family income.

The residential function locates the family ecologically in social networks, housing, the community, and region. Quality of housing is a natural focus for examining the effects of external factors such as discrimination on family life. Some families can find adequate housing; others cannot. However, the residential variable reaches beyond housing to include a mix of neighborhood amenities--good schools, clean streets, and adequate recreational facilities. Ultimately some families may be more safe and others more vulnerable to dislocation and disruption because of the neighborhoods that they are able to occupy.

Finally, the legal or cultural function sets the group boundaries, defines the group's identity, and symbolically structures all transactions to give them a particular meaning. Through legal and cultural definition of relationship, the family passes on tradition and material property. Of interest here for questions of discrimination is equal protection of the rights of persons who live in one type of family relationship as compared with another.

II. Sex-Role Discrimination and Family Life

When we use these indicators to compare different family types, there are notable differences in the economic and nurturant dimensions according to whether a wife is in the labor force or not. Briefly stated, the husband-wife families with a working wife tend to have a somewhat higher income, but there is a trade-off on the nurturant side with some evidence of greater role overload

and less time available for homemaking tasks than in families with a nonemployed wife in the home.

The single-parent families, particularly the female-headed ones, experience difficulties on both the economic and nurturant fronts because two adults are not available to share these crucial family tasks. Sex discrimination against women in the labor market hampers the ability of a single female head to provide adequate income. Sex discrimination against man's family work hampers the single male head's ability to perform child care and homemaking tasks. The following analysis shows the general effects of sex discrimination in paid work and family work and then traces their consequences for two major family types, the husband-wife form, and the female-headed form.

The Economic Provider Role

Where the breadwinner is involved, sex discrimination particularly operates against women. Problems are manifest in women's lower pay and lesser opportunity for advancement and promotion. Ultimately, however, these difficulties can be traced to a combination of institutional factors including the early socialization process, occupational segregation, and the difficulty of meshing work and family schedules.

The pay differential between men and women is of long-standing duration. Even a century ago in America it was noted that women earned roughly 55 percent of what men earned. Over the past decade women's earnings as full-time year-round workers has dropped from 62 to 59 cents for every dollar that men earn. Moreover, if one compares the life-time earnings of men and women, even those matched by education and occupation, the earnings curve of women levels off after their initial years in the workforce while that of men continues to rise more steeply before leveling off.

Elaborate economic analyses have attempted to explain this phenomenon. Since the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and subsequent efforts to enforce equal opportunity legislation, it is difficult to find cases of blatant sex discrimination where women are given lower pay for exactly the same type of work that men perform. Instead, we find that women typically perform different types of work. Large numbers are concentrated in a few occupations such as clerical workers (36%), service workers (21%), or professional work as teachers, librarians, and social workers (8%)(Barrett 1979: 47). The problem is not limited to America. A recent comparison of nine western industrial countries showed similar occupational concentration of women and lower earnings for women. However, after accounting for differences in age, education, and occupational distribution of the male and female labor force, a 45% difference still remains between male and female mean income for full-time workers in the United States as compared with a 43% difference in Denmark, 34% in Sweden, and 18% in the Federal Republic of Germany (Treiman and Roos 1980).

This powerful sex difference in earnings can be traced to a number of indirect factors: particularly the overcrowding of women into a few occupations with high competition and low wages as a result, and the persistence of a dual labor market with steady high-paying jobs occupied primarily by men at the core, and seasonal less well paid jobs on the periphery occupied by women and other members of the secondary labor force (Blau and Jusenius 1976).

What is important for our purposes is that both the overcrowding hypothesis and the dual labor market theory are related to women's position in the family as well as the workplace. It is possible, for example, that women choose particular overcrowded occupations because they promise lower obsolescence of skills, and this is an advantage if a woman must move in and out of the labor force in response to family obligations (Polachek 1975). Second, the dual labor market theory suggests that workers carry certain marker characteristics which tell

an employer whether they will be a good risk for investment of on-the-job training. To the extent that such a marker characteristic as sex suggests a poor risk (because it is thought that a woman will soon leave due to marriage, pregnancy, or a move), a woman is likely to be shunted into the category of low status or seasonal employee where opportunities for training and advancement are poor and her income is low. By the same logic a man's chances are much better.

The Nurturer Role

What are seen as women's liabilities for the workplace are, however, advantages for the parental and homemaker role. The very flexibility and responsiveness to family needs that are judged disadvantages for job advancement are deemed assets in the nurturer role. By contrast, men tied to jobs are judged less able and are in reality less prepared to perform these caretaking functions.

The pay differential suggests women's disadvantage in the workplace. There is no comparable standard by which to document men's lower performance in the home. About the closest we can come to such a comparison is through measures of time use and analysis of time diaries. Work by Walker and Woods (1976) based on data collected in 1967-68 revealed that husbands of employed wives spent only one-third as much time on family work as did their wives. Other studies suggested as little as a fourth. A more recent report by Pleck and Rustad (1980) using data collected in 1977 suggests some improvement in this picture. Husband's hours spent in family work time are now roughly 55% that spent by their employed wives, but the picture is still one of marked inequality in the family work domain even if not in total hours of paid and family work.

Impact on Husband-Wife Families

Effects of sex discrimination on husband-wife families can be measured using both economic and nurturant indicators. It is particularly revealing to compare the situation of those families where a wife is in the labor force with families where a wife is a full-time homemaker. The intact family with a working wife appears to benefit economically, as shown in Table 3. The median family income of the two-earner families is a third higher, a difference of $4,300.

If we compare the labor force participation rates of wives according to their husband's income, it is clear that the highest rates are found among wives whose husbands have the lowest incomes. In 1977, 57 percent of wives whose husbands were in the lowest income quartile were in the labor force as compared with 46 percent of wives whose husbands were in the top quartile. However, it is noteworthy that the greatest gain in women's participation rates was in the top income groups (from a 25 percent rate in 1960 to 46 percent in 1977) rather than in the lowest group whose participation rate was already high (40 percent in 1960). The change was especially striking among wives under age 35. The participation rate of women from the highest income group more than doubled between 1960 and 1977 (from 19 to 43 percent) while the rate of the lowest income group rose less sharply (from 35 percent to 58 percent) (Ryscavage 1979). Nevertheless, on an economic dimension families clearly benefit from women's employment, and the lowest income groups especially so.

The question could be raised whether families with homemaker wives are suffering any discrimination as a result. Here the answer must be mixed and cautious. Several indicators are relevant. First, on the economic front, it can be argued that nonemployed wives risk some discrimination under the present tax and Social Security system. To the extent that family

Table 3

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME BY TYPE OF FAMILY, UNITED STATES, 1976

Type of Family	Total (in thousands)	Median Family Income
Husband-wife families	47,046	$15,302
Wife in paid labor force	21,628	$17,581
Wife not in pd. labor force	25,417	$13,274
Male head, no wife present	1,541	$12,367
Female head, no husband present	7,494	$ 6,983

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1978. Consumer Income, Series P-60, No. 110, p. 7.

income is still conceived as primarily the property of the earner who gained it, the homemaker wife is in a vulnerable position if widowed, separated, or divorced. She risks becoming a displaced homemaker without skills or relevant job market experience. If the tax and Social Security system are revised to treat marriage as an equal partnership, she will gain protection and coverage of her her work in the home (Gordon 1979a and 1979b). At the same time a rationale will be established to aid the displaced homemaker.

Child care and homemaking are other dimensions on which family types can be compared. From the perspective of those interested in fostering women's employment outside the home, inflexible work schedules and difficulty of arranging good child care outside the home constitute obstacles that are possibly discriminatory. Women's employment is enormously affected by the ages of their children. Among married women with a husband and children under three, 32 percent are in the labor force compared with 55 percent among wives who have children 14 to 17 years and none younger (Johnson and Hayghe 1977). To the extent that presence of young children and lack of child care forces a woman to drop out of the labor force, it could be contended that de facto discrimination against the working mother is contributing to women's secondary status in the labor market and ultimately their lack of advancement and lower pay (Levine et al. 1980).

In addition, the husband-wife family with a working wife bears the strain of extra working hours, sacrifices time that could be spent with children (the employed mother spends half as much as the non-working mother with her children), and cuts down on the time spent in homemaking and other caretaking tasks. It could conceivably be argued that the employed wife is at a disadvantage despite the economic benefits of her work and that remedies should be found that allow her to approximate the role flexibility and leisure

enjoyed by the homemaker wife. Thus part-time work, flexible hours, maternity and paternity leaves would enable both women and men to make a better combination of work and family tasks (Moore and Hofferth 1979a and 1979b).

In the final analysis, there seem to be different costs and benefits for both major types of husband-wife families. Current policy proposals primarily emphasize choice and flexibility and ultimately the idea that both husband and wife should be able to participate in paid work and family tasks if they so desire. Discrimination is found in those instances where role stereotyping contrains choice and limits flexible adaptation.

Impact on Female-Headed Families

We have already seen in Table 3 how median income of the female-headed family was only $6,983 in 1976, less than half (45 percent) of the median for all husband-wife families. In 1978 nearly half (49 percent) of all poor families were headed by women, up from 35 percent in 1961 (U.S. Dept. of Labor 1979). Yet more than half of female heads were in the work force in 1977 and their employment made an enormous difference in their total family incomes. In father-absent families with a mother in the labor force, the median income was $8,100 compared with only $4,400 if the mother was not employed (Waldman et al. 1979).

The difficulty for many female heads is that they must take major responsibility for both the economic and the nurturance functions. In 1977, 15 percent of all pre-school children were in female-headed families (10 percent of whites, 41 percent of blacks). The result of a woman's trying to meet the dual demand to be an economic provider and a nurturer is likely to be considerable work overload and strain with little time for her children (Brandwein et al. 1974). Or a woman may string out her unemployment benefits and hold out for

as high a paying job as she can, especially if she has young children. In 1977 the proportion of female family heads who were unemployed was higher than among married women, and while all working mothers had an unemployment rate of 8.6 percent, the rate for mothers with children under six and absent husbands was 16.9 percent (Rosen 1979).

What interpretation should be laid on these facts? Is there evidence of discrimination, and what is the appropriate policy response?

Ross and Sawhill (1975: 153) in their landmark study of the growth of female-headed families nicely sum up the issues as follows:

> ...Exactly what policy response is called for is not clear. Should efforts at keeping families together be undertaken; efforts to make female-headed family life less isolated and deprived; or efforts to facilitate remarriage and the formation of new husband-wife families? What acceptable, effective policy devices are there to promote any of these objectives?
>
> Given the paucity of evidence that marital mobility and single-parent headship harms children, the genuine social and economic hardships faced by female-headed families, and the general lack of existing policy other than subsistence-level public assistance to deal with their needs, there is a presumption that the pressing policy need is to make life less difficult for female-headed families.

The authors go on to state that many of the available policy options such as improved day care, social services, and child support arrangements are within the range of approved public policy devices whereas direct actions to influence private decisions on marriage and family are not.

Since the publication of Ross and Sawhill's book in 1975, perhaps the most important new development in the field of policy proposals that would affect the female-headed family have come out of the Poverty Center at the University of Wisconsin. Studies by Cassetty and Garfinkel suggest the need for a universal guarantee for child support that would operate across all families, whether headed by two parents or one. If a family should separate, the parent with custody of the children would receive a minimum guarantee plus an added

portion collected from the absent parent through the IRS. Such a plan addresses the present woeful lack of support payments by absent fathers and the inequitable court orders and lack of enforcement that presently prevail (Cassetty 1978; Uhr 1979).

III. Discrimination by Household Type and Family Form

When we turn to discrimination against families that is based on other grounds than sex roles, we confront legal and residential issues. Very often it seems that generic family forms other than the husband-wife nuclear model must struggle to find desirable housing and to establish their fundamental legal rights and their right to exist. This section will briefly review some of the legal and residential issues that confront alternative family forms such as the single-parent family, the large or extended family, and experimental forms including the household of unrelated individuals living together.

Issues for Single-Parent Families

With a divorce rate that is the highest in the world (3.72 per 1,000 population in 1972) it is not surprising that Americans experience a good deal of volatility in family structure and that much of this revolves around the single-parent family. Although only 16 percent of American families in 1976 were not husband-wife families, a much higher proportion than that had experienced disruption with about a five year interlude between first and second marriages (Watts and Skidmore 1978). The number of children involved in divorces and annulments in the United States has steadily risen over the last generation from 6.4 per thousand children under 18 in 1953 to 16.9 in 1975 (U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare 1975: 2-9). At present

40 percent of all new marriages are expected to end in divorce and from one-third to one-half of all children born in the 1970s are expected to spend at least a few years in a family with only one parent present before they are 18. In 1970 only about 70 percent of children under 18 years were living with two natural parents who had been married only once. (Glick 1975; Glick and Norton 1977).

The consequence of all these changes has been concern about the growth of single parent families and worry that current policies and programs, particularly the AFDC program, may contribute to the breakup of families. Over the last several decades the number of children living with natural parents actually grew from 90 percent in 1940 to 97% in 1976; but the proportion living with both their natural parents declined (Moore and Hofferth 1979a). More troublesome was the fact that while the proportion of single-parent families rose less than three percentage points overall, from 12.4 percent of all families in 1950 to 15 percent in 1980, the ratio of male-to female-heads changed dramatically. In 1950, 3.0 percent of all families had a male head with no wife present, as compared with 9.4 percent headed by females with no husband present. By 1980 the proportion of male-head single-parent families had fallen to approximately 2.5 percent while the female-headed families had increased by nearly a third to 12.5 percent (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1977: 62). In 1960, 36 percent of children in families headed by women had no living father; in 1977 this percentage had dropped to 26 (Uhr 1979).

Add to these demographic trends the evidence of great inequities between men and women in the support of these children. According to one estimate, as many as 40 percent of all divorced, separated, and single women have never received financial assistance from fathers of their children. Yet one study

by Cassetty (1978) suggests that the great majority of absent spouses were better off than their wives and children and that even among the poor mothers in the sample enough money was available to raise them above the poverty level without causing the fathers either to fall below the poverty line or to reduce their income below that of their families (Uhr 1979).

These issues are considered here again in connection with discrimination by family form even though they have already been mentioned under the heading of sex discrimination. The inequity in child support responsibilities between men and women is frequently a question of competition for resources between households as well as between parents. The various Poverty Center proposals for changing the child support system move in the direction of equalizing disposable income between the parent with custody (usually the mother) and the parent without (usually the father). A new system to collect support payments through the IRS would simplify enforcement procedures, possibly reduce the divorce rate and remarriage rate of absent parents, and perhaps restrain remarried parents from having a new family. All this would happen because it would become more difficult for absent fathers to escape from economic responsibility for their children merely through separate residence and the inability of the courts to enforce support orders (Uhr 1979; Watts et al. 1979; Garfinkel n.d.).

Extendedness, Family Size, and Composition

At the same time that single-person households and single-parent households have been on the rise, the number of large families has declined, the average number of children per family has fallen, and the future of the extended family made up of three or more generations has been in doubt. Between 1960 and 1970 the number of families containing subfamilies declined slightly

(from 3.2 percent to 2.4 percent). Asked whether they would want to share a home with their parents, 31 percent of respondents to the NORC General Social Surveys in 1973 and 1975 said they thought it a good idea compared with 55% who thought it a bad idea. Yet in 1970 the proportion of all families who were extended was slightly higher (7.2 percent) than it had been in 1960 (5.5 percent), perhaps because more older people were living longer (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1977: 68; Seward 1978: 165).

In the face of the predominant trend toward nuclearity in family structure, extendedness is nevertheless of interest because of possibilities that it offers for pooling resources. One of the most persistent and powerful findings of the Michigan Five Thousand Family study is that family composition affects economic well-being. Generally speaking, the more earners present, the better off the family (Morgan et al. 1974; Lane and Morgan 1975). In addition, there is growing interest in the family as a care provider for frail elderly and other disabled persons. Rather than give incentives for separate residence or institutionalization, it now appears desirable for policies and programs in some instances to encourage extendedness, or at least not to interfere with it. Housing shortages, however, may militate against the large family; landlords may not wish to rent to families with children; and zoning ordinances may discriminate against households that are not of the nuclear type.

The tight housing supply and discrimination against families with children is noted here but will not be covered. A review of statistics on housing size, typical location and types of housing available should be done that matches housing supply with what we know of the types of families seeking housing to ascertain what amount of discrimination exists.

My observations here focus particularly on the intersection of the

residential function and legal definitions of the family. Under what conditions should households that approximate families be treated like them, and when is there justification for treating them differently? Several recent court decisions present a complex picture of the evolving jurisprudence in matters of the extended family and of complex households. In the case of Village of Belle Terre v. Boraas (1974), for example, a household of unrelated individuals (students near the SUNY Stony Brook campus) was denied the right to live in a given area because it did not comform to the dominant nuclear family pattern of the neighborhood. In another case, Moore v. City of East Cleveland (1977) the Supreme Court invalidated a municipality's attempt to enforce a single-family zoning ordinance that defined "family" so narrowly as to prevent a grandmother from living in the same residence with her son and two grandsons who were first cousins rather than brothers. In still other instances the court held that a household could not be denied food stamps even though it contained unrelated individuals (United States Department of Agriculture v. Moreno [1973]), nor could a household be denied welfare even though it contained illegitimate children (New Jersey Welfare Rights Organization v. Cahill [1973]).

In his treatise on American Constitutional Law, Laurence H. Tribe (1978: 975-990) concludes from these cases that each in its way protects families from undue intrusion on their privacy and their freedom of association. In the case of Belle Terre, it was this right of families already established in the community that prevailed over the right of transient students to invade the neighborhood and potentially change it. The Moreno and Cahill decisions held that government cannot use the threat of withholding subsistence benefits in order to reinforce the traditional family. In Moore v. City of East Cleveland enforcement of the zoning ordinance

would have interfered with the choices implicit in a special family relationship.

This trend in the law suggests to me a potential for development of new household and family forms that can enjoy some protection and validation by the law. Rights of privacy and freedom of association could together operate in ways that reinforce the traditional extended family and still allow groups that are functionally similar to families to be protected as such, even if they are not formally so labeled.

Living Arrangements of Unrelated Individuals

A closely related issue is the living arrangements of unrelated individuals. The proportion of all single-person households has doubled from just over 10 percent in 1955 to approximately 20 percent today. The proportion of primary individuals has likewise risen, especially among women over 65, among whom 23 percent lived alone or with nonrelatives in 1955, and 39 percent in 1975 (U. S. Department of Commerce 1977: 64). At the same time the number of households with two or more unrelated individuals nearly doubled from 991,000 in 1970 to 1,867,000 in 1978 (U. S. Department of Commerce 1979: 43).

A striking increase occurred in the proportion of these two-persons households containing unrelated individuals of the opposite sex. In 1970 they were about a quarter of the total. By 1978 they constituted nearly a half. Many of these individuals are young and will eventually marry. But others are old, and one-sixth of male primary individuals over 65 live in such arrangements, probably because they are widowers and would lose their survivor's benefits if they remarried (Glick 1975).

Some Americans feel that such arrangements are none other than a form of "living in sin." Sociologists, however, who have observed the growing acceptance of these alternate family forms, have shown that among the young or the newly separated they frequently constitute a trial arrangement that either ends soon or leads to a more permanent and formal family arrangement (Giele 1976). As such they probably serve some useful purpose.

In fact, for older people, congregate living arrangements for the single, widowed, or married person appear to hold promise of lowering living costs while also providing an alternative to lonely isolation. Yet some senior citizens who have attempted to establish such arrangements have met with discrimination and harrassment (Nathanson 1980). Either communities have not been accommodating, or zoning regulations and housing conditions have proved obstacles.

Many other issues concerning the living arrangements of primary individuals could be addressed here: the difficulties for the widow, widower, or single pregnant woman; the problems of households containing unrelated individuals of the same sex; half-way houses that try to approximate a family atmosphere, and so on. Suffice it to say that all of these variants in living arrangements -- their nature, distribution, history and problems -- offer a rich field for research. More needs to be known about their potential disadvantages and benefits and the kinds of discrimination that they encounter.

IV. Possible Future Developments

In conclusion, I should like to reflect on implications of the findings and trends that have been documented in this paper so far. The nature

of the changes that we are experiencing in family life are comparable with processes of specialization and recombination that we have experienced in many other areas of modern society. Constance Perin (1977: 214-215), an anthropologist and city planner, has described the world in which we live as a "componential society."

> Dividing wholes into component parts and recombining the parts is a mode of thought giving rise to the major intellectual revolutions of this century...What had appeared to be whole is split into its parts, thus posing the entirely new possibility of recombining each variously. In technology, modular building, multivariate regressions, hi-fi components, cafeteria menus, and "separates" in clothing are everyday commonplaces. Socially, even the "breakdown" of ideal family structure may be operating from some of these same principles.

Groups living today as "families," though not "nuclear" families, consider themselves as "family." They are new social combinations created by a greater freedom of individuals to act autonomously. Thus single persons may live together by agreement rather than by wedlock and thereby combine elements of friendship and marriage. Other unrelated individuals living together lower their costs yet share an intimate relationship and thereby combine some features of economic enterprise with those of family life. Along side these new forms a very considerable portion of the population continues to live within the bounds of the traditional pattern.

Rather than polarize Americans according to which family pattern they follow, I believe the challenge to the 1980 White House Conference on Families is to recognize the variety of valid options available. New "family-like" combinations can occur that promote family values even though the structural elements have never been put together that way before. Policies should thus encourage individual self-determination

and autonomy but at the same time foster commitment to others and to the community.

Greater Sex-role Flexibility

One of the most powerful examples of social atomization and recombination is to be found in contemporary sex roles. The activities of each sex have been broken down into a number of components--employment, child rearing, cooking, housekeeping--that are increasingly capable of being recombined in new and flexible role packages. Much of this change seems to be for the good. It allows individual men and women to adapt to changing circumstances over the life cycle. In addition the personalities of both male and female are broadened to include some of the valuable characteristics of the other.

Yet sex discrimination frequently stands in the way of such broadening and flexibility. The first half of this paper documented the costs that result for families of all types when sex-role stereotyping constricts the range of accepted activities for either women or men.

Broader Definition of Family Life

Just as sex discrimination can constrict the variability and choice for individuals and ultimately for their families, so also a constricted definition of family can militate against the extension of positive and caring behavior to groups not ordinarily so defined.

Perhaps it is time to broaden the official census definition of family life to include households where persons live in an intimate relationship even though not related by blood, marriage, or adoption (Watts and Skidmore 1978). Such a change would be consonant with the changing realities of behavior and emerging family ideals.

Consensus on Basic Family Values

Whether or not Americans can agree on a broader definition of what constitutes a family unit, I believe they already display consensus on family values. Deep down, they believe that a home should be a haven of rest and safety, a place where when you come others must take you in, and a place where children grow up, people reveal their deepest feelings to each other, and there is continuity and commitment over time.

Diversity in Life Patterns

The very discipline of trying to state such basic family values immediately makes one aware of how often groups that officially call themselves families fail to live up to these standards and how often, by contrast, one's intimate friends and non-family members may be more like a mother or brother than kith and kin. This is not a new discovery. Ancient convention in the church recognized the potential universality and flexible application of family terms, witness the terms of address for priests and nuns (Father, Sister, Mother Superior) and comparable appelations among the laity in certain reformed sects (Brother, Sister, the Brethren).

Thus family is a relative, not an absolute, concept, at least so far as defining the groups who constitute it is concerned. By recognizing the many forms that it can take, we accept a diversity in life patterns and a plurality of possibilities: husband-wife families, single-parent families, households of unrelated individuals, intentional communities, and many others. Each has a legitimate place; each can qualify as family to the extent that it attempts to realize basic family values of intimacy, caring, commitment, and concern.

Policies to Promote Equity and Choice

Given this two-part rationale, that there are basic agreed-upon family values, yet many ways of trying to achieve them, we have the theoretical foundation for seeking national policies and programs that promote equity and choice. Only in such a context can discussion of family discrimination occur.

Ultimately, the purpose of examining discrimination is to suggest how things may be improved. We have shown here the vulnerability of the two-earner household to overwork, the potential risks to the homemaker-wife if she loses her breadwinner-husband, and the dire circumstances of many single-parent families. In addition, other emerging family forms may face discrimination that has yet to be fully documented. Surely, it would be too simple to deal with these problems by trying to force all families back into a single traditional mold. Instead the challenge of the future is to construct an overarching value consensus that unifies us in diversity and that helps all household groups to attain the humane and caring qualities that we associate with the best of family life.

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